

## Airport Ballrooms by urdearestmom

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**Genre:** Alternate Universe - Modern: No Powers, F/M, I just had this idea, and it wouldn't leave me alone, idk what this is honestly, so i wrote 3251 words for it

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**Characters:** Dustin Henderson (mentioned), Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper (mentioned), Maxine "Max" Mayfield (mentioned), Mike Wheeler, Richie Tozier

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**Summary:**

What happens when you hear a piano at 3 am?

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

lol so i have an unfinished fic and another AU i started recently but instead of writing for either of those two i did this

it was an idea that wouldn't leave me,,

i see mike as that tall skinny pianist who wears black turtlenecks and leans over the keys really dramatically when he plays

the first song he plays is Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 9, No. 2 by Frédéric Chopin, and the second one is Waltz of the Flowers from The Nutcracker by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky but arranged for piano (this version is a good one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prstQk8RGWQ>)

i hope you guys enjoy this random thing i came up with, please let me know what you thought!

She hears it before she sees anything. Right as she exits the washroom, a song's beginning is heard from a piano. As it proceeds, she finds that it's vaguely familiar.

Coming into the open area where she's been sitting and trying to nap for the past three hours, she sees that the formerly vacant piano is now occupied by a man whose fingers are gliding across the keys, his dark hair slipping over his brow. He looks like he might be about her age, although she's not sure.

He's very concentrated on his playing, so he doesn't notice when she stands off to his left, watching. He ends the piece softly and when he looks up, he sees her and jumps, putting a hand to his chest.

"Jesus Christ! ...almost gave me a heart attack there," he laughs.

She smiles. "Sorry. That was really nice," she says, gesturing to the

keys. "What was it?"

He shrugs. "Just some good old Chopin."

She nods. "Sounds familiar."

"Did you recognize it?" He asks. "It's one of his most famous pieces."

"Yeah, kinda sounded like a lullaby or something." She scrunches her nose. "Never mind."

He hums. "No, I get what you mean, it has that quality to it," he says, getting up and pushing the bench in. "What's your name?"

For some reason, it's at that moment that she notices he has freckles, although not many. "Jane Hopper, but I go by El. I like your freckles," she unashamedly comments, then cringes. *Fuck*.

They start moving toward the seats where she left her luggage, and she sees that there are a few more bags nearby that must be his.

"Really?" He answers. "I used to have a lot more when I was younger, it's kind of a side effect of aging that you lose freckles."

"They're cute." She looks at her feet. *Again? Seriously?*

"Alright," he chuckles. "If you say so, El."

It's then she remembers she hasn't asked his name.

"Michael Wheeler, but no one except my parents call me Michael. Mike's easier," he says, tilting his head. "Were you on that flight to Indianapolis? I think it's the only one that got delayed this late."

She sits back where she's been this entire time, and he sits next to her. They've just met, but it's nice not to have to sit in an empty airport terminal at three in the morning by herself, chasing sleep she knows she's not going to find. "Yeah, I'm going home. I was in Vegas at a speech pathology conference."

Mike grins. "Vegas, huh? What's it like, hit up any casinos?"

El lays her head back. "I was there for work, so no. I guess I could have, some of my coworkers did, but casinos aren't really my scene. Too loud," she responds. "My friend Dustin definitely did, he's still there," she adds with a smile.

"He sounds like fun."

"Definitely is, though sometimes he can be a bit of a handful," she laughs. "How about you? Going home too?"

Mike nods. "Yup. I was in LA visiting my cousin, but also working. I'm a piano teacher," he says, wiggling his fingers. "And there's been a new initiative here in the States, to get some sort of standardized way of teaching, like the Royal Conservatory in Canada. So there's been collaboration happening, stuff might be in the works."

She turns to look at him, taking in the excited way he says this. "You seem really happy about that," she remarks.

He nods again excitedly, his mop of hair flopping over his eyes. "Absolutely! It would make things easier if every teacher across the country had a certain level of things to teach students. Be easier for students too, especially if they ever have to switch teachers." Suddenly he blows air upwards. "I need to cut this shit," Mike says, gesturing to the dark locks surrounding his face.

El contemplates him for a second, taking in how he looks. "Nah, it looks good with your face." *GOD, EL! Stop being so forward, you just met him!* "I think so, at least, if my opinion counts for anything," she says, suddenly shy.

It's weird, she thinks, that she just met this guy less than ten minutes ago and they're already talking so easily.

He smiles. "It does," he says, taking out his phone. He shows her what's clearly a selfie, but it looks like there's two of him. "That's my cousin." Mike points at the one who's wearing a Guns N' Roses shirt. "And this is me." He's wearing a simple striped t-shirt.

She looks more closely at the picture, trying to find some difference between them. "You guys look like twins!" She exclaims.

"We could be, if he wasn't five years younger. We get that a lot though," he answers. "I think you're going to agree with me on this." He continues. "He says he's more attractive, but I say we look the same and therefore have the same appeal. What do you think? As an outside party."

El looks at it again, and finds that she disagrees with Mike. "I think you're cuter. Something about you," she replies.

She looks up to find that a lovely pink blush is spreading across his cheeks. "Something I said?" She winks. *Oh my god you fucking idiot.* She suddenly feels crushed by the weight of her mortification.

He makes a strangled noise, and the hour and her tired brain must be getting to her, because somehow she finds it the funniest sound she's ever heard. It's also a little comforting that he doesn't seem completely put off.

"*Damn*, that was smooth!" He says, starting to laugh too. "I gotta tell him you said that."

"Isn't he sleeping by now?"

He shakes his head. "No, he says sleep is for the weak. And it's only two in Cali, and it's the weekend."

She reads over his shoulder as he types.

***Cute girl said I'm cuter than you LOL***

***Suck on THAT tozier***

"You think I'm cute?"

Mike blushes again. "Yeah, pretty. Really pretty," he says softly. He gets a text almost instantly.

**I dont believe u wheelie**

**U probably paid her or smth**

**Also, suck on what ;)**

**Actually nvm thats incest its just my reflex response**

Mike looks at her. "Is it okay if we make a video and send it to him so he believes me?"

She shrugs. "We've still got at least four hours to kill, so why not?"

He pulls up the camera and starts recording. "Fine, you don't believe me, here she is herself," he says, turning the camera on her.

She waves awkwardly. "Hey... um, what's his name?" *Cringe.*

"Richie."

"Hey, Richie, just a little video to say that in my opinion your cousin's cuter than you. And no, he didn't pay me to say that," she states, glancing off camera with a small smile.

Mike turns the camera back to him. "There you go, asshole. Video proof."

He sends it, and they wait a minute in anticipatory silence before Mike's phone vibrates with another text.

**Lmao that doesnt convince me**

**She is cute tho ill give u that**

Mike heaves an over-exaggerated sigh, shaking his head. ***You're a dick, he types, go to sleep I'll text when I get home.***

**SLEEP IS FOR THE WEAK, MICHAEL.**

***GO THE FUCK TO SLEEP, RICHARD. YOU HAVE WORK TOMORROW.***

**FUCK WORK**

Mike stares at his phone for a second before turning it off. "If I keep talking to him then he'll never actually go to sleep."

El smiles at him. "He seems like a fun person."

“Oh, he’s an absolute dick. But I love him,” Mike says, shaking his head again. “We weren’t really close as kids but then he moved nearby and we talked more, except then I went to college. He’s closer with my little sister.”

She nods. “Do you have any siblings?” He asks.

“Nope. Just me and my dad.”

“That’s nice. Sometimes I wish there had been less people in my house, would’ve meant less embarrassment in certain situations,” he says. “I have two sisters, one older, one younger.”

“I wish I’d had a sister growing up, would’ve made things easier sometimes,” she answers. “Can you even imagine how awkward my dad was the first time I got my period?”

He doesn’t say anything for a second, and she thinks maybe she shouldn’t have said that. *OH MY FUCK.*

“Sorry, that was awkward,” she laughs. *WHAT THE EVERLOVING FUCK.*

“No, it’s fine, just unexpected is all,” he says. “I mean, we’ve only known each other for like fifteen minutes.”

They look at each other, the same thought going through their minds. “This is weird,” they say together, and then they start giggling.

“I just-” He takes a breath. “Do you feel like you know me from somewhere? Because I feel like I know you but I don’t think I’ve ever met you before.”

It’s what she’s been thinking. She feels a sort of familiarity with him, something she’s never felt so quickly with anyone else. It’s like she’s known him for a long time, or maybe in another life or universe.

She grins. “Isn’t there a multiverse theory?”

After spending an hour discussing parallel universes and the physics involved in understanding any of it (which they both have enough of a basic grasp on because of watching too much History Channel),

Mike is sitting at the piano again, El having asked him to play something else. She doesn't recognize the beginning, but as it progresses she realizes she does know it. It gets her moving, and she doesn't really know what she's doing, but she's circling the piano and the man playing it in a way that somehow fits with the music. She even sings along with the main melody and the trills.

She feels like he's transforming the place into a gigantic ballroom with his music, and she's the princess dancing with her prince (except there's no prince to dance with, because he's too busy making the music). It's a stupid thing to think, but she never had dolls or was allowed to watch princess movies or read fairytales when she was a kid, and she feels like she missed out. Hopper let her watch movies and read, but it wasn't the same as a teen as it would've been as a kid. And maybe it's just a dumb fantasy, a creation of her mind because she's tired and suddenly thinking about her horrifying childhood, but she thinks the imaginary ballroom that only has her and Mike in it is a wonderful place to be.

He ends the piece with a theatrical flourish, throwing his hands up off the keys as soon as the last notes are played. "How was that? You were *dancing!*"

A laugh escapes her lips as she claps. "It was amazing! I knew that one, it's from the Nutcracker, right?"

Mike nods vigorously. "Gotta love me some Tchaikovsky."

"Is that why it's so dancey? Because it's for a ballet?" She asks, curious.

"No, it's because it's a waltz," he answers, stretching his arms up above his head. His sweater rides up to reveal a sliver of pale skin, and she finds herself staring without being able to tear her eyes away. "Waltzes are inherently dancey, I think. At least that's what I always tell my students who play them, it helps them really hear the tempo and accents if they try to see the dancers."

She averts her gaze, and he's still talking. "You know, 'cause waltzes have the accent on count one, so it goes *one*-two-three, and sometimes when you're caught up in playing you forget about it so



it's good to try and envision the dancing. The music was written for dancing after all," he finishes. "El? Sorry, was I rambling, because I have a tendency to-"

"No," she breathes. "You're just really attractive. The piano suits you." She almost face palms. *WHY am I like this????*

That shuts him up, a redness spreading across his face once again (but this time along with a wide grin). He might just combust if he looks at her, so he looks at his hands instead.

"Sorry," she says, worried she's crossed a line she wasn't supposed to yet.

Mike's head whips up. "Sorry? What are you sorry for?"

"I'm too forward. It almost always ruins things with guys." She deflates almost imperceptibly, and she wonders if he noticed.

Apparently he did, because El feels herself pulled into a sideways hug, tugged down to sit on the bench next to him. "Hey," he says softly. "You're just saying what you think is true, which is a great quality to have. You saved me from my own rambling, so thanks." He gives her a squeeze and adds, "It hasn't ruined things with me."

Suddenly the air is charged and she thinks that if they weren't in an airport she might have kissed him then. Sadly, they are in an airport. Instead, she requests that he play something more contemporary than Chopin or Tchaikovsky, and he starts up with a rendition of Halo by Beyoncé.

They spend another hour around the piano, him playing more and she observing. El thinks he plays with a lot of grace, his fingers moving deftly across the keys almost as though he's stroking the instrument. He looks like he belongs in front of a piano, making beautiful music for all the world to hear. In this case the world is a strange woman in an airport at the asscrack of dawn.

It's five in the morning when the pair crashes back onto the seats next to their bags, and they lean their heads on each other and fall asleep. However, it seems things are only in increments of one hour

on this night, because it's six when El awakes with a start, knocking Mike's head off of hers.

*"Attention passengers: flight 337 to Indianapolis International is now scheduled for take-off at eight thirty. Boarding will begin at gate twenty three one hour in advance."*

"Hey," she says, seeing Mike next to her looking disoriented. "Flight's at eight thirty but we gotta be there at seven thirty, do you wanna get some breakfast?"

Looking around, she sees that the open area that was so empty during the night now has other people milling through it, and it shatters the warm space she'd felt she and Mike were in. It's time to go back to the real world, away from the fantasies of ballrooms and princes and dancing. The magic of the night has been erased by the movement of the morning and she hopes what she thinks she felt between them hasn't been erased too.

He yawns. "I'll take that as a yes," she says, getting up to stretch and grabbing her bags.

They walk around the slowly filling terminal, looking for a place to eat, and light upon a cute coffee place in the food court. They order and eat in silence, avoiding looking at each other, until he speaks.

"Does last night... feel like it was a dream, to you?" Mike asks.

*I thought that was just me.* She takes a sip of her black coffee. "It kind of does, yeah. This entire encounter has been weird."

He looks down at his croissant, crinkling his nose, then peeks back at her through his lashes. "I'm sorry."

"Nothing to be sorry for."

He says nothing else, and neither does she, so they head off to gate twenty three, and she thinks something's wrong because he wasn't this quiet or awkward last night. The tension is palpable, but she's never been very good at social interactions and she doesn't know what to say. *He probably realized how dumb I am.* She thinks she may have come across as very brazen (which she is, but she hates it for

how it ruins everything all the time). Mike hadn't seemed bothered by her earlier, and she had hoped that something good might have come out of their chance meeting.

It seems it was not to be, however, because the only thing he does as they board the plane is wave and give a little half smile when he finds his seat. El sighs and settles in for the hour and a half flight. She's decided she's going to try to catch up on the sleep she missed instead of sitting in abject misery, and it works because she's blinking confusedly when a flight attendant wakes her to say that they will be landing in approximately forty minutes.

She's excited to be back home, to work, her patients, her dad and Max. But she's also the teeniest bit sad because she wants to explore that special connection she feels with Mike, to see what it means and what it's about and she believes she's ruined her chances (okay, so maybe she's more than a teeny bit sad). She's convinced herself that nothing was ever going to happen, she had imagined the unexplainable thing she felt between them.

She makes it through baggage claim and isn't sent to customs, so El's on her way out of the terminal to catch a taxi because both Max and Hopper are working today when something *does* happen. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees a person running out of the passenger exit, and she thinks that they must have seen a loved one they missed.

That is, until she hears the shout. "El!"

It's Mike of course, and he comes to a skidding halt in front of her, breathless. "I just- ran- all the way here- because- I'm a dumbass-"

"Whoa, hey, breathe," she says, "I don't need you dying on me in the middle of the airport."

He nods and waits until his breathing levels out before straightening up. "I wanted to apologize for being so stupid and awkward this morning, I don't know what got into me." He swallows before looking at her directly. "I really want to see you again, so... do you wanna go out sometime?"

*WHAT!* She doesn't respond for a few moments, shocked. But then

she grins and says, “Are you asking me on a date?”

He sucks in a breath, about to shake his head, she can tell, but then he stops. “You know what, fuck it. Yes, I am.”

“Well, I’d certainly like that.”

El leaves the airport with Mike’s number in her phone, and she’s only been in the taxi for a few minutes when it pings with a text.

***Can you do tonight at 7?***

He’s eager, and she likes that she’s not the only one. It assures her she’s not being some creepy, obsessive, stalker.

**Someone’s eager lol**

**But yes**

**Where?**

***I was supposed to go to a “friend’s” party tonight but I never actually said yes and I really don’t want to haha***

***Kinda cheesy but I was thinking a roller rink if you want to go***

***There’s one near my place and it has an arcade too!!***

Growing up in the 90s, El remembers being fond of arcades. She and Max used to hang out in them all the time. *Another thing in common!*

**Aaaaaa the arcade I miss those**

**Sounds good, pick me up or meet you there?**

***I can pick you up lol I don’t mind***

She sends him her address, and he sends back a GIF of a penguin dancing.

***See you later :D***

## 2. Sylvia Is Bae

### Notes for the Chapter:

I wrote a follow-up cuz a bunch of people wanted one, so here's our lovely couple about a year after their chance encounter

*Hey :)*

Mike has sent the same text every afternoon for the past year. It's after his last student leaves at five o'clock, and it's when the clinic El works at closes. She'll undoubtedly respond within minutes.

*Hey loverboy :)*

It never fails to make him smile. Everything she does makes him smile, even when she's not there. Tonight, however, he has plans.

*Do you wanna see a movie later*

*The greatest showman is still in theatres and I know you wanted to see it so*

If she says yes, they can go see the movie and then come back to one of their houses and order a pizza or something. Then he'll have to work up the courage to ask her about a thing he's been considering for a while.

*Ya def*

*What time*

*There's a showing at the Greenwood cinemark at 7 is that enough time*

*Then we can come back here or to yours and get a pizza or smth*

*Sounds good*

*I'll go home and shower then meet you there at 6:30*

*Love you <3*

***Love you too <3***

He turns off his phone and puts it down with a smile, getting up to get a glass of water from the kitchen. He almost trips on his cat, who is sitting in the doorway. She does this at least once a day, refusing to let him pass. When Mike tries to step over her she hisses and throws up a paw to claw at his pants, or if he's very unlucky, his bare legs.

"No- come *on*, Sylvia! I just want some water," he says, looking down at the fluffy mass of grey fur on the floor. She looks up, and he notes that she looks deeply unimpressed (she always looks like that). She gives a satisfied meow when he huffs and walks into his bedroom instead.

*Stupid cat*, he thinks. But then he feels bad. Sylvia has been with him for the last five years since he brought her home from the shelter. He'd originally gone in to look at the dogs, but he had to walk past the cats first and something about Sylvia had spoken to him. He never realized it, but it was probably the very same deeply unimpressed look that he sported himself quite often that he noticed on the cat. They have made use of the same living space since.

Most days she's like any regular cat, minding her business and sleeping, only coming to bother him when she's hungry and doesn't have food. Other days all she does is be bothersome, meowing at Mike's feet every three seconds for no discernible reason. But the days that really count are the days she can tell he's upset.

Those are usually days he talks to family or friends, hearing from his older sister about the state of their parents' marriage, his younger sister about the latest idiot she dumped, his friend Will or cousin Richie about someone who's told them they deserve to go to hell for being who they are. Sometimes it's when he himself is having a bad day, either a student isn't putting in enough effort or he's frustrating himself with his own shoddy practice. Somehow, Sylvia always knows, and that's when she comes to curl up on his stomach while he couch surfs at night.

Now that he has El in his life, though, he has a human to confide his

deepest secrets in instead of his cat. Still, because his girlfriend doesn't live with him, Sylvia gets to hear the most. It's nice to know that she's judging him but won't talk back.

Mike flops onto his bed and promptly registers that he hadn't made it that morning. *Gross, how am I gonna convince El that it's a good idea to move in together if I can't even make my own bed?*

Considering this, he thinks about the rest of his apartment. He lives on the second floor of a duplex, the upright piano he gives lessons on sitting in the room right off the staircase. At the end of the hall is his bedroom, which has a large window in it and is, objectively, the best room in the house. In front of the stairs is a tiny bathroom, and beside that is a doorless doorway that leads to the kitchen, which is open to the living room and back porch. It's small and cozy, and he likes living there. The problem now is that he's considering all the flaws. It's narrow, the shower will boil you alive if a faucet gets turned on somewhere else, the window frames are chipping, and the *entire* apartment is banana yellow. The floors are also quite hideous, a combination of old linoleum and old wood, as are the pink tiled walls and floor of the bathroom.

None of this is even considering the fact that the place is a mess. Mike has books all over, never quite being able to organize them by level (or by who uses them, really). When a student needs one he always spends about five minutes looking for it because it's never where he last left it. Their stuff frequently gets mixed up with his, and he's always surprised he hasn't managed to forget a recital or competition.

This, coupled with the anxiety he's felt since morning when he decided that today will be the day he asks El to move in together, catapults him out of his bed and into the bathroom, taking his dirty clothes with him to the hamper. Mike takes the quickest shower he's ever taken, totalling a whopping three minutes under the water, then rushes back to make his bed the neatest he's ever made it. He shoots into the piano room and does his best to pick up after his teaching method, although the room looks almost the same after he leaves it. He then makes a running jump over Sylvia, who hisses angrily and turns to look at him as he starts furiously washing dishes.

“Stop looking at me like that,” he says. “I’m cleaning up so if we come back here it’ll be good to ask El to move in.”

Sylvia turns away, and Mike thinks that if cats could snort, she would have. It’s a very derisive head turn.

After the dishes are in the second sink drying, Mike makes his best attempt to fold the pile of blankets that he left on the couch the night before. He’s just grabbing a wet cloth to scrub at a cup stain on the table when Sylvia comes over and sits on his feet.

“Are you serious?” He groans, looking down at her. “I’m trying to make this place look half-decent!”

His cat gives him a look as if to say, *you’re an idiot*. It’s then that he remembers that El has actually been to his apartment before, so he’s stressing over nothing. This is another of the good things about Sylvia; she knows when he’s being stupid, too. She moves off his feet when she decides that he’s calmed down enough, and he sits on the floor with his legs crossed. She comes to sit in the space created, and petting her fluffy body calms him further.

“Thanks, Sylvie. You’re a good cat, you know?” She purrs in response, as if she comprehends what he’s saying. “Do you like El? I think you like her. Would you like it if she lived with us?”

Sometimes he feels stupid talking to a cat, but there’s something about Sylvia that makes him feel like she understands. She purrs again. In fact, Sylvia likes El more than she likes him, Mike thinks. She’s never an asshole when El is over, and never even once has she accidentally scratched the woman. It’s unfair. Maybe she’ll be nicer when El moves in. *If! Don’t get ahead of yourself, here.*

After a few minutes, Mike realizes he has to go if he doesn’t want to be late, so he puts Sylvia gently on the floor outside of the cradle of his legs and gets up before pouring some food for her. “I’ll be back later, okay?”

Sylvia meows and pads over to her favourite spot, the middle of the couch.



## *Leaving now! Sylvia sat on my feet lol*

Mike gets to the theatre around six-forty to find that El is in line to buy their tickets. “Hey,” he says, pressing a kiss to her cheek and grabbing a hold of her hand.

“Hey,” she says back, smiling. “I love your cat so much, by the way.”

“Hmph. I’m pretty sure she likes you more than she likes me,” he answers.

“It’s okay, at least I like you more than I like her.”

“I’ll be sure to tell her you said so.”

They start to laugh, but quickly shut up before attracting too much attention.

The movie turns out to be pretty interesting, but Mike likes the soundtrack best because he’s a music nerd (as is made blatantly obvious by his profession). It’s phenomenal!

El definitely agrees, but her favourite thing is the love story between P.T. and Charity. “Come on,” she says, tugging on his arm as they walk down the street to where her car is parked. “You can’t look me in the eyes and tell me that that was not the cutest love story you’ve ever seen! They fell in love as kids and they stayed together even through all the shit they went through!”

“I don’t know,” he laughs as they reach the car. “I feel like meeting the love of your life in an airport at three in the morning because you decided to play some Chopin is pretty cute, too.”

She grins at him over the roof. “Yeah. That’s pretty special.”

Getting in, she turns to him. “Yours okay?”

Mike rolls his eyes. “Yeah, Sylvie’s probably dying to see you.”

“Again, I love your cat.”

“Yeah, yeah, Hopper, just drive.”

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“COME ALIVE! COME ALIVE!” El is screeching and Sylvia isn’t even hissing or anything. It makes Mike more bitter than he should be, to be honest. Like, he gets that El is literally the most wonderful human to ever grace the planet Earth with her existence, but Mike’s the one who feeds the goddamn cat and lets her live in his house. It’s shameful.

“GO AND LIGHT YOUR LIGHT, LET IT BURN SO BRIGHT!” She’s doing karaoke and dancing across the carpet from the table to the TV and back. She’s not a bad singer if she tries to sing, but what she’s doing right now is exactly the opposite. She’s trying to get her boyfriend to sing with her, but there’s a reason he’s a piano and not voice teacher, as he always says. El finishes the song with an exaggerated bow. “Thank you, thank you!”

Sylvia meows from her place on top of Mike’s slippers. El glares at him. “Jesus, Wheeler, even your cat appreciates me more than you do.”

“I’m eating and my hands are full,” he says, picking up another slice of pizza from the box next to him. “Bite me.”

El laughs. “I would, but you always go off about not letting your students see inappropriate things like *hickeys*.”

“It was huge and it was visible! She was seven!” He drops the slice on his shirt, leaving a nice grease stain. He groans. “Look what you made me do.”

“Whoa, there, Taylor Swift,” she giggles, dropping onto the couch next to him and grabbing the last slice.

Mike throws her an irritated look. “We may both be musicians, but I am *not* Taylor Swift. And now my shirt is dirty.”

“So?” She bites into the pizza in her hand. “It’s not like it was gonna stay on you anyway.”

It comes out garbled because of the pizza she’s eating, but he still

understands and he flushes. He's gotten somewhat used to her bluntness over the course of the year they've been dating, but sometimes she still says things that make him feel hot all over. However, it means he's mastered the art of answering her with a straight face.

"You are disgusting."

She shrugs as he gets up to throw the box out, shoving the last of the slice in her mouth and following. "You love me, so... I'd say that sounds like a you problem."

He doesn't turn around for a second, bracing himself on the lip of the sink before whipping around and pulling her up onto the counter, capturing her lips in a searing kiss. She breaks it a few moments later, breathless. "God, I love you," she says.

Then she hops down and drags him away to his bedroom, ignoring Sylvia hissing in the background.

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It's after, when they lie tangled in his sheets, still ignoring Sylvia who is now scratching at the closed door, that Mike remembers what he'd meant to ask.

"Hey, El?"

"Yeah?" She murmurs. Her hands are cupping his face as she runs her thumbs softly over his lightly freckled cheeks.

"I have a question."

"What is it?" She presses a tender kiss to the tip of his nose and pulls back, smiling.

"Do you- um- would you, maybe... want to move in together?" *There, I've said it. God.*

She looks into his eyes, and he thinks he's about to get a yes when she turns over and says, "Good night, Mike."

"El- what-" He splutters, heart sinking. *Fuck, was I too soon?*

El flips back, starting to laugh, but then sobers up at the look on his face. “Sorry, that was a little mean. I’d love to. I love you, and I love Sylvia, so getting to see you both all the time doesn’t look like it has any negatives.” She snuggles into the crook of his neck and kisses his collarbone. “But we can talk about that tomorrow. Good night,” she yawns.

Mike feels warm all over, and sighs contentedly before shutting his eyes.

Outside the room, Sylvia purrs. She’s excited too.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

if you couldn't tell, i really love the greatest  
showman like,, a million dreams is my JAM

also i love sylvia lmfao

### **Author's Note:**

it's the shakira penguin gif